



## MAINE WILDLIFE PARK 2012 ANNUAL NEWSLETTER



2012 has come and gone, and with it another successful season at the Maine Wildlife Park. I am always amazed by the ever-changing trends and patterns with visitors and weather that we witness while working at the park, and 2012 didn't disappoint! 2012 started with a dismal economic forecast - remember? Record-high gas prices were predicted, along with decreased summer traffic and economic activity. Thankfully, the experts were wrong and we enjoyed another year of record-breaking attendance and revenue instead! As always, it was our volunteers who kept the wheels of park operation turning so we all can enjoy successes like these and be hopeful for continued growth in the future.

The park is one of the most fortunate organizations in the State of Maine. Even with our 150 plus current volunteers, the park still sees new volunteers interested in providing assistance, making recruitment less of a challenge and increasing productivity. However, when it comes to our volunteers I am most thankful for the dedication of those who have been contributing their energy and talents over many years. They have done nothing less than fully invest themselves in the continued operation, growth, and success of the park - for free. That is service that can't be quantified and for which words fall short. That being said, here they are again; THANK YOU!

### 2012 At-A-Glance

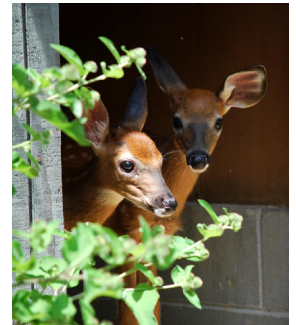
The park hosted over 106,000 visitors in 2012 - breaking several records across the admissions and revenue chart. For starters, this attendance represented a 10% increase from 2011. Better yet, it made for a new all-time-record for paid admission and total revenue! A closer look reveals some of the best-performing sales categories of 2012, with Senior Citizen, Group and Tour admission sales setting new records. The Mercedes bequest funding, providing full scholarships to school children for our wildlife educational programming, has no doubt provided a boost to group and tour admissions over the past two years. We have also made a concerted effort to target visiting school children with different promotions and coupons.

Some of the park's special programs also broke records in 2012. We've seen increased interest in the park as a birthday party destination, with shelter rentals steadily increasing over the years to a new high this past season. Also, the summer photopass program nearly doubled in participants from last year, setting a new record as well.

Of course, no year is perfect, and our three biggest special events showed significant decreases in attendance. The Native American Pow-Wow and Halloween-Fest were plagued by poor weather, with both of the events essentially losing a day of business to rain. However, there was an event turnout "rainbow" with the park's first "North Woods Law" feature. Over 1,100 visitors showed up to meet their favorite NWL Star for pictures and autographs on a Thursday afternoon. Needless to say, this event has already been scheduled again for 2013! The park's gatehouse wasn't the only booming operation in 2012 - the other revenue-generating operations within the park also had excellent seasons. The Nature Store had a record-breaking season, increasing net revenue by 48% over 2011! The Friend's Snack Shack



also did very well financially and kept our visitors happy with a full variety of snacks and treats. Both of these establishments have demonstrated their adaptability over the years by changing their offering to best suit the interests of our visitors. The park's vending machines and feed dispensers also produced record-high revenue in 2012.



## Current and Upcoming Projects

It never gets boring at the park during the winter; in fact it seems we are just as busy - but in different ways. The park's full time staff is joined by workers from the Maine Correctional Center to work on everything from painting to new construction. To date, we have already made several improvements to existing furniture, buildings and structures with many more projects lined up for the winter. Examples include a new small shelter, a modified ground bird display, improved water systems, refurbished signage, replaced fencing and much more.



The park is also preparing for some much larger projects this year. After dealing with several complications pertaining to waste disposal, the new bathroom facility has been fully designed. We are planning for groundbreaking work to take place in the spring and hope it will be finished for as many 2013 visitors as possible. A conceptual design has also been completed for a new lynx enclosure. The start of this project will be dependant upon available funding, but we are hopeful that we can start in 2014. In the more immediate future, our visitors can expect to see all new species signs in 2013. These signs will add educational value, increased readability, and will dramatically enhance the overall presentation of the park's wildlife. Also in 2013, our 'plastic money'-carrying visitors will enjoy the services of an ATM located at the gatehouse.



*November 30th ended a nearly 20 year era, when 'Bob' the mountain lion was put down due to many old age related medical complications. Many park volunteers and staff had a special fondness of this park veteran; some even remembering his birth in 1993. Over 4500 people read his tribute on the Park's Facebook page, and hundreds commented.*

*Likewise, countless park visitors remembered him from early childhood visits to the park. After all, a mountain lion without a tail is something you don't easily forget. For others, it was the intimidating encounter they remember - when Bob would stare at you like a potential piece of food or stalk young children as they walked past his enclosure.*

*Whatever the reason, this magnificent cat earned a lot of respect from a lot of people. Bob had a long, enjoyable life at the park, greatly exceeding the average lifespan of all wild cats big and small. He was at least able to enjoy a full season in the new cougar exhibit, which is something that all of his admirers can be happy about.*

I want to thank all of the park's staff, Friends, all volunteers and supporting organizations for a spectacular 2012. In addition to breaking several attendance and revenue records, this season saw the completion of one of our most unique and ambitious projects in park history - the new cougar exhibit.

The park's continued growth is a testament to the hard work of the park's many supporters of all types. This continued support has created a popular attraction that the Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife and the State of Maine are fortunate to have, and for which I am grateful to be a part of.

Thank you all again and have a Happy New Year!

*Curt Johnson*  
MWP Superintendent